

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz

March 18, 2013

Dorood. As you and your families come together to celebrate Nowruz, I want to extend my best wishes to this new spring and new year. Around the world, and here in the United States, you're gathering at the Nowruz table to give thanks for loved ones, reflect on your blessings, and welcome all the possibilities of a new season.

As I have every year as President, I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to the people and leaders of Iran. Since taking office, I've offered the Iranian Government an opportunity: If it meets its international obligations, then there could be a new relationship between our two countries, and Iran could begin to return to its rightful place among the community of nations.

I have no illusions about the difficulty of overcoming decades of mistrust. It will take a serious and sustained effort to resolve the many differences between Iran and the United States. This includes the world's serious and growing concerns about Iran's nuclear program, which threatens peace and security in the region and beyond.

Iran's leaders say that their nuclear program is for medical research and electricity. To date, however, they have been unable to convince the international community that their nuclear activities are solely for peaceful purposes. That's why the world is united in its resolve to address this issue and why Iran is now so isolated. The people of Iran have paid a high and unnecessary price because of your leaders' unwillingness to address this issue.

As I've said all along, the United States prefers to resolve this matter peacefully, diplomatically. Indeed, if—as Iran's leaders say—their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, then there is a basis for a practical solution. It's a solution that would give Iran access to peaceful nuclear energy while resolving once and for all the serious questions that the world has about the true nature of the Iranian nuclear program.

The United States, alongside the rest of the international community, is ready to reach such a solution. Now is the time for the Iranian Government to take immediate and meaningful steps to reduce tensions and work toward an enduring, long-term settlement of the nuclear issue.

Finding a solution will be no easy task. But if we can, the Iranian people will begin to see the benefits of greater trade and ties with other nations, including the United States. Whereas, if the Iranian Government continues down its current path, it will only further isolate Iran. This is the choice now before Iran's leaders.

I hope they choose a better path for the sake of the Iranian people and for the sake of the world. Because there's no good reason for Iranians to be denied the opportunities enjoyed by people in other countries, just as Iranians deserve the same freedoms and rights as people everywhere.

Iran's isolation isn't good for the world either. Just as your forbearers enriched the arts and sciences throughout history, all nations would benefit from the talents and creativity of the Iranian people, especially your young people. Every day that you are cut off from us is a day

we're not working together, building together, innovating together, and building a future of peace and prosperity that is at the heart of this holiday.

As you gather with family and friends this Nowruz, many of you will turn to the poet Hafez, who wrote: "Plant the tree of friendship that bears the fruit of fulfillment; uproot the sapling of enmity that bears endless suffering."

As a new spring begins, I remain hopeful that our two countries can move beyond tension. And I will continue to work toward a new day between our nations that bears the fruit of friendship and peace.

Thank you, and *Eid-eh Shoma mobarak*.

NOTE: The remarks were recorded at approximately 1 p.m. on March 15 in Building 371 at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont, IL.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Nowruz, videotaped remarks.

Subjects: Holidays and special observances : Nowruz; Iran : Diplomatic relations with U.S.; Iran : International and U.S. sanctions; Iran : International diplomatic efforts; Iran : Nuclear energy, civilian usage; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Iran : Relations with U.S.

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